

## **The Crimea in Acts and Fates of Russian Rulers (Scenes and Facts from Native History)**

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### **Abstract**

*The article traces the history of the Crimea for almost 500 years of its existence and the impact that it had on the fate of Russian rulers. Readers are invited to quite rare materials of prerevolutionary historians and writers, as well as the memories of the people who were in the thick of things. It also analyzes the current situation with the annexation of the Crimea to Russia.*

**Keywords:** Crimea, Russian emperors, Russia, Turkey, Europe, Stalin, Khrushchev, Gorbachev, Putin

Да посрамит небо всех тех, кто берётся  
управлять народами, не имея в виду  
истинного блага государства  
(Екатерина II)

Looking at the history of the Russian state it can be seen that for centuries it was the Crimea that played some fateful role in the affairs and destiny of Russian rulers. Almost all the rulers of Russia since Basil III were involved in heavy and ruinous conflicts, where on the Crimean side were sometimes whole coalition of European powers. This accelerated the demise of a number of Russian rulers, and sometimes served as a catalyst to change the world order. The starting point in the problem was the year of 1453, when the Turkish Sultan Mohammed II the Great (1430-1481) took Constantinople and finally defeated the Byzantine Empire. European states did not support the ancient Byzantium and on the ruins of the great Christian civilization created the powerful and aggressive Ottoman Empire, which for centuries would unleash many wars in order to expand its power. It is for Russia that is destined to be a participant of these wars to drink the bitter cup.

The Crimean Khanate (1443-1783), which will be discussed later, stood out from the Golden Horde, and was a vassal of Turkey since 1475. Crimean Tatars since the 15<sup>th</sup> century were a nest of robbers. They stole people, stole cattle and sold it all to Turkish merchants. Men fell into slaves, rowers on the ships, chained to a life of slavery. Crimean Khanate under Ivan III (1462-1505) did not go into hostile relations with Moscow. Initially, the Crimea was exhausted with the struggle of Turkey and the invasion of the Golden Horde; subsequently approved in the Crimea Giray- Mengli even became an ally of Ivan III . Under Vasiliy III (1505-1538) after the fall of the Golden Horde, the Crimean Khan begins to compete with Moscow over influence on Kazan which results in the series of invasions of the Crimean Girays to the borders of Russia. Thus, the invasion of Mengli-Giray took a vast territory; predatory gangs stretched as far as Moscow and more than 800 thousand of the prisoners were taken away are the Crimeans [1, p. 456].

The existence of the Crimean Khanate, which controlled the roving hordes, ready to invade Russia at any time, was one of the major reasons for the slow settling of the Russian people in the huge mainland in central and southern Russia, and poor progress of cultural development in the Russian country in general. According to N. Kostomarov, "Our history would have taken a different path, if in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Ivan IV had not ignored the advice of smart people and had fully conquered the Crimea."

Indecision, unpredictability and even reluctance to use bright victories of the Rzhevskiy squad in 1557, which defeated the Crimeans under Islam-Kermen, took the Ochakivskiy fort, defeated the Tatars and the Turks themselves were serious mistakes of Ivan IV.

Afterwards, Adashev's squad also made a great havoc on the west coast of the peninsula. Ivan IV did not make any use of it and chose to fight for Livonia giving the Crimea a break to gather strength. So arbitrary tyranny, when many Christians with Slavic roots were thrown to the Crimea, led to a serious political mistake, for which Russia paid in the following centuries. Crimean Tatars under the guidance of Davlet- Giray, who recovered from internal turmoil, gathered a huge army of 120 000 people, besieged and burned Moscow, killing over 700 thousand people. Ivan the Terrible used it to organize the monstrous repression against his immediate environment, talented generals [6, p. 604]. With particular cruelty, he personally tortured a successful commander, Prince Mikhail Vorotynskiy, who in August of 1572 won a brilliant victory in Tauris capturing Nogai Murza. History repeated itself over 456 years, when another autocratic ruler I.V. Stalin sent to death generals- heroes who liberated the Crimea from the White Guard - A.L. Cork, I.P. Uborevych; and the strange death of the hero of the Crimea M.V. Frunze, could be attributed to the same reason. Boris Godunov, who came to power, used rumors of the Crimeans' invasion, gathered a huge militia, which scared the Crimean ambassadors, which resulted in the concluded treaty of eternal union with Kazi-Giray, which dramatically increased the confidence of the Muscovites to Godunov [12, p. 689]. During the invasion of the Poles and the False Dmitry I, the King of Poland, Sigismund, even armed the Crimean bandits, convincing the Crimean Khan to join False Dmitry to attack Moscow. The status of the instable Crimea burdened Russian history over centuries. The Moscow government in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries to ease the raids almost every year sent rich gifts to the Crimean Khan and his Murzas.

Russia imposed a special tax to collect money to redeem the captives from the Turks and Tatars. This redemption was called "general charity," which involved the Tsar and all Orthodox Christians. V.O. Klyuchevskiy illustrates the size of the redemption rates that were rather high. The ransom for the peasants and slaves were was about 250 roubles, and thousands of roubles for the people of the upper classes [7, p. 119]. Moscow was afraid to take the Crimea, which was under the Turkish rule. In 1616 the Astrakhan governor, Prince Lvov defeated "crafty steppe predators", the Nogai people and forced them to serve against the Crimeans' raids [12, p. 27]. Since 1636 Mikhail Romanov began to build fortifications against the raids of the Tatars. Afterwards, the Tsar Alexey Michailovich began to organize observational units, and this constant regimental service absorbed a lot of energy [10, p. 54]. According to the well-known historian A.E. Presnyakov, the fight with the Tatar invasions needed "colonization to build defense outposts, as Russia did not have forces to cardinally solve the problem and was afraid of technical difficulties of the march across the steppes to the Crimea" [10, p. 134].

It is interesting to note that the next Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich was a "good man, a nice Russian soul" [7, p. 119]. Caught in a stream of complex cases, he acted erratically with gusts to everything new and helped the first reformers [10, p. 146]. One of his brilliant approximates was chief chamberlain F.M. Rtishchev. According to the historians, he was the largest public mind of his time. At the same time he used his own money to redeem captives from the Crimean Tatars, and even transferred the capital of 17 thousand rubles for successive action in this field [7, p. 119]. The death of Alexei Mikhailovich again brought about the Time of Troubles when each party sought a means to win the throne. This included organized military campaigns during the short reign of Sophia. Two campaigns in the Crimea taken by her favorite V.V. Golitsyn ended in failure. In his last expedition to the Crimea in 1689, he had 112 thousand troops and 350 cannons.

Not having reached Perekop, fearing the heat, lacking water, V.V. Golitsyn retreated, and this campaign became the main reason for the fall of the Tsarina herself [8, p. 107-110]. The next epoch of Peter the Great was fateful in the history of Russia, and the war filled all the reign of the ruler. N.O. Losskiy in his works illustrates the quotation of the historian S.M. Solovyov: "From 1368 to 1893 during 525 years there were 329 years of war, which means two years of war, and one year of peace [9, p. 109]. Peter wanted to withdraw the Turks from Europe, to free enslaved Slavic peoples. After the 30-year peace treaty with Turkey on July 3, 1700, Azov was ceded to Russia; a huge annual tribute to the Crimean Khan was destroyed [1, p. 467]. However again, as it was repeated in history several times, Poland and Austria secretly concluded an advantageous peace with Turkey, and Russia was one against the Turks, and only appearance in the Black Sea of the strong Russian fleet made it agree to peace, recognizing Azov as Russian territory. Taking Azov gave the opportunity to threaten Turkey and the Crimea from the sea and stop Tatar raids [12, p. 70].

The war with Sweden strongly bled Russia, and Turkey, taking advantage of this, declared war, where Russia after the conclusion of peace had to return Azov (1709). In the times of Anna Ioanovna, civil war in Poland forced Russia to take measures and send troops there. Turkey tried to intervene, fearing the growing influence of Russia at the expense of Poland and declared war on Russia, where it was defeated.

Anna Ioanovna wanted to put an end to the Tatar raids, however, France and England began to threaten war and Russia had to give away the Crimea, but managed to return Azov with a small part of the Azov Sea.. Particularly significant events related to the Crimea, took place in the reign of Catherine II. Heavy defeats of Turkey at Cesme, Largo and Cahul allowed Russia to set requirements to transform the Crimea into an independent state under the protection of Russia. In 1772, Russia started negotiations with Turkey about the Crimea which ended with the Küçük Kaynarca Peace Treaty (1774), according to which Turkey agreed to the independence of Crimea. The loss of the Crimea to Turkey was a major blow, because it was the road to it militarily and commercially, many nobles had estates here and palaces, which came to rest. It was hard, and the Crimean Tatars, who without raids on Russian land could not sell at high prices slaves. With the fall of the Crimea there began strife and riots. Khan Shahin Giray could not cope with the situation and asked to join the rebellious Crimea to Russia. Turks to come to terms with this failed and unleashed a second war (1787-1791). Brilliant victory AV Suvorov Rymnik, Ishmael, and further plans for a campaign against Constantinople forced the Turks to sign with Iasi (1791), a world in which the Crimea, the entire North Shore of the Black Sea in Russia were given an eternal and indisputable ownership [1, p. 117].

Special impression was produced by the journey of Catherine II to the Crimea with illumination for over 50 miles in circumference, with magical palaces and gardens created in one night. According to V.O. Klyuchevskii, "in 100 years, assessing her achievements, we are talking about the global role of Russia and national pride, the general rise of the Russian spirit ... Catherine received Russia, with not a single Russian ship on the Black Sea; with the Turks and Tatars dominating on its northern coast, taking southern steppe and threatening predatory raids. All this together depressed national spirit. Catherine turned southern steppes turned into New Russia, the Crimea became the Russian area; between the Dnieper and Dniester there was not an inch of the Turkish land left ... "And Rear Admiral Ushakov in 1798 entered the Bosphorus as a defender of Turkey [7, p. 265]. The grandson of Catherine II, Alexander I, was one of the first rulers of Russia, whose personal fate, and even death were associated with the Crimea. After experiencing incredible exaltation, as the winner of Napoleon, and incredible frustration from the creation of a "European Home", suffering an aggravated moral depression that haunted all his life after the murder of his father Paul I, he went to survey Sevastopol and other Crimean cities. In the Crimea, he caught a bad cold, returned to Taganrog very sick, and on November 19, 1825 died.

The Crimea played a special role in the fate of the future Emperor Nicholas I. In general, if you refer to the work of this highly controversial ruler of Russia, you should, first of all, get rid of the excessive politicization of its image and that autocratic demonic character, which were attributed to him especially in the Soviet history. If Berdyaev, Herzen, Karamzin, and other figures considered Nicholas I "moral murderer" [13, p. 19], in his memories the Earl V. Sologub expresses quite a different opinion about this emperor. "I want to say a few words about the personal character of Nicholas, of whom many people out of ignorance created an incomplete impression. It is true, the emperor was blessed with an iron will and unswerving firmness, but in the depth of his heart he had inexhaustible kindness, and his bright mind comprehended everything and, however meaningless a statement it may seem, forgave everybody "[15, p. 418]. And here again we see the duality, when trying to create a strong and autocratic empire, according to the historian A.F. Smirnov [10, p. 435] "; he created a colossus with the feet of clay, which collapsed under his feet of the horrified emperor." This apparently led him to his death, mysterious and unprovable. Hence the long plying rumors of suicide of the emperor, who thought control on the personal will and personal views to be a direct duty of the autocrat [10, p. 287]. The outbreak of a terrible political and military disaster in the Crimean War was a blow from which Nicholas never recovered. Which events in the reign of Nicholas I can be used to understand the difficult situation where which Russia found itself at the end of his reign? That was the time of the most complicated intrigues from the part of European states, which put Turkey in the center of diplomatic coalitions. Strict policy of Nicholas I interned with Russian hegemony in the East resulted in the break between Russia and Europe rallied against it. The Crimean War of 1853-56, marked by the entry of Russian troops in Moldavia, Wallachia, in order to protect the Orthodox faith, initially caused an extraordinary rise of patriotic feelings in the society. The event received a great importance, as it linked the fate of Russia and Western Europe. It was particularly evident among the Slavophiles. On November 22, 1854 S.T.

Aksakov wrote to I.S. Turgenev: "What a stressed state I now live in! Fighting in the Crimea is a great drama in itself, but, in my opinion, this is only a prologue to the great world drama, whatever side is destined to win "[13, p. 18]. However, Russia, being alone against European countries that rallied against it, experienced a heavy defeat in the Crimea due to its economic and military backwardness. Despite the exploits of the Caucasian Army, the heroism of the Sevastopol heroes, the victory was impossible to get.

The contemporaries left horrific evidence about unusable obsolete weapons, damp powder magazines, theft, bribery, which led to the collapse. It was the collapse of all the hopes and achievements of Nicholas I. On February 12, 1825, receiving bad news from Yevpatoriya, he said, "how many lives have been sacrificed in vain" [10, p. 445], and died shortly after turning to his family with these words: "Serve Russia, I would like to take over all hard and heavy things, leaving the kingdom of peace, arranged, happy. Providence promised otherwise. Now I go to pray for Russia and for you. After Russia, I loved you more than anything in the world" [12, p. 181]. So whether it actually happened is a difficult question, but by studying the memoirs of contemporaries, and thinking about the era of the "Golden Age of Russian Nationalism," which was the reign of Nicholas I, [10, p. 268] we believe that this was the case.

The war with Turkey ended with the Peace of Paris under Alexander II (1856). Sophisticated curves of the eastern policy in the Balkans in the 70-s years of his reign once again highlighted the protection of the Slavic peoples from the Turkish yoke, which resulted in Russian war with Turkey in 1877-1878. In the course of the war Russia made brilliant achievements, which were reflected in the Treaty of San Stefano. All this achieved stability in the south of Russia was further developed during the reign of Alexander III, a peacemaker, when the world was full of and was accompanied by a profound peace, which Russia throughout its history could only dream of harmony, and the reign of this monarch was reached in the world. However, the Crimea again played a tragic role in his life. Already gravely ill, on the advice of doctors, he went to the Crimea, but the summer of 1894 was cold, and having lived in Livadia one month, October 20, 1894 he died.

For his consort Maria Fyodorovna events in the Crimea unusually developed in an unusual way was more like an intricate detective story with a happy ending. In his memoirs, [3, p. 234-264] Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich as well as Maria Fyodorovna who avoided the fate that befell the entire dynastic family tormented by the Bolsheviks, describes their misadventures. In an atmosphere of incredible revolutionary turmoil, their guard changed rapidly from the representatives of the Provisional Government to moderately-minded Bolsheviks Sevastopol Council. They were also hunted by very zealous Bolsheviks of the Yalta Council who wanted to kill all remaining Romanovs. Alexander Michailovich describes it in a very picturesque way. In spring of 1918 the Germans occupied the Crimea, but under the terms of the truce were to leave it. On November 24, 1918 in Sevastopol met the British navy, which by the order of King George V had to take the remains of the royal family to London. So Maria Feodorovna and her family managed to leave Russia on April 11, 1919 on the cruiser "Marlboro" to avoid death.

Meanwhile, the bloody events in Russia grew; centuries-old order collapsed giving rise to the Great Russian confusion that ended with the devastating civil war. Again, the Crimea becomes a kind of void vector in the new Russian history. In 1920, in the Crimea was the last residence of the ruler of the South of Russia and the Chief of the Russian Army, General Baron P.N. Wrangel. Reading his memoirs, one can only admire the order, the political-economic approach, which he established in the Crimea and in the surrounding areas for a short time and. It might have been a good model for Russia without the horrors of collectivization, terror, however, as it already happened in the history many times, his faithful British allies, who came to terms with the Bolsheviks and completely refused to help him. P.N. Wrangel was defeated.

All his memoirs, many movies and novels show the last order of P.N. Wrangel, which really demonstrates the full depth of the suffering of this extraordinary ruler: "... Further path is unknown. We have no land, except the Crimea ... God, give us all strength and intelligence to overcome and survive the hard times in Russia "(29 October 1920, General Wrangel) [4, p. 421]. On the other hand, cunning and unscrupulous policy of the new government was demonstrated fully in the Crimea! Despite the appeal, published in the newspaper "Pravda" on September 12, 1920 signed by V.I. Lenin, A.A. Brusilov, L.B. Trotsky, M.I. Kalinin, S.S. Kamenev. The appeal guaranteed life to the captured fugitive soldiers, Cossacks and sailors believe it 20, however for about 56-70 thousand of those who believed in it, it brought torment and death. Especially cruel were G.L. Pyatakov, Bela Kun and "the fury of red terror" (according to Alexander Solzhenitsyn) R.S. Zemlyachka.

It is interesting to note that the Crimean Tatar, bolshevik M.H. Sultan-Galiev put more effort to combat this terrible terror [11, p. 355-372]. In the new era, which for decades was linked with the name of I.V. Stalin, the Crimea turned out to be extremely important again. One can mark the most striking and tragic years, associated with the Crimea: 1942, 1944, 1945, 1948-49. These years demonstrate the tragedy, the triumph, and even microstroke of the Leader, which is death. Thus, the beginning of the war in 1941 became a heavy blow for Stalin, as he was much deceived by Hitler, as a result, the Red Army suffered a serious defeat.

His autocracy was shaken, but it still did not make the President of the Defense Council, I.V. Stalin, listen to experienced military men and weigh their decisions, linking them with the reality. Another severe lesson for him was the Crimea. By Mid-March of 1942, Stalin contrary to the plans of the General Headquarters on the organization of the strategic defense insisted on a number of offensive operations [2, p.185]. In the Crimea, the Red Army had a real numerical superiority, but suffered a major defeat. In his diaries K. Simonov describes that terrible mess, which he witnessed in the Crimea [14, p. 65-85] For Stalin, it was a heavy blow, since again after the defeat in 1941 he realized that he should not have appointed the heroes of the Civil War as the war generals of the mechanized war. After K. Voroshilov, S.M. Budyonny, Eph. Shchadenko, he sent L. Mehlis who especially distinguished himself in the repression of the military in 1937-38 to a less responsible area, and Marshal Kulik was disgraced. The defeat in the Crimea, put Sevastopol in a difficult position, but in spite of this the city stood for 250 days and was left by the order of the General Headquarters. The heavy defeat of the loss of the Crimea, in Donbas, near Voronezh, the breakthrough of the Germans to Stalingrad brought to life Stalin's order №227 of 28 July 1942, which was called "Not a single step back." Military developments in the Crimea in 1944 developed in a different way. Few people remember "Stalin's Ten Blows to the Enemy," which were first listed by I.S. Stalin in the first part of the report on the "27th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution" on November 6, 1944 at the session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' Deputies. The third blow in this series was delivered by the troops of the Red Army in the South direction. As the result Odessa and the Crimean group of the German 17th Army was defeated and the Crimea was freed. Marshal A.M. Vasilevsky in his memoirs describes in detail the brilliant operation, against a very strong German group. Despite this, the whole operation took 35 days and Sevastopol was taken [2, p. 390-413].

Stalin's activity in 1945 is marked by the Yalta Conference with the participation of Great Powers, the Allies. It was held on February 4-11 in Yalta. The conference had a fateful significance for the postwar world. It was there that the decision was taken to establish the United Nations (UN), which still carries out its important mission in the world. The death of Franklin Roosevelt, the emergence of the US atomic bomb, strongly influenced the behavior of America that was especially evident after 1945. It was the beginning of «Cold War»; the clashes occur on all the global problems. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict gained special importance, when on November 29, 1947 the UN General Assembly supported by the partition of Palestine. In 1947-1948 Stalin actively supported Israeli and Zionists' claims in general. That is why the Soviet Union paid special attention to the activities of the Jewish Antifascists' Committee, which was seen as a bargaining chip in the struggle for the world domination. Even the project "California in the Crimea" was started, where under the banner of the Jewish autonomy the Jews from all over the world could have permanent residence in the Crimea [5, p.41]. Stalin's Crimean project was bait which he hoped to use to get a ten billion loan. The unfolding Cold War, fear of Europe and America from the expansionist plans of the USSR buried this project, and took the lives of many of its supporters.

Heavy foreign policy defeat in 1949 (when Israel chose the western way) cost I.V. Stalin him a microstroke with loss of speech. Doctors strongly encouraged him to move away from public affairs, however, the sick leader again started to untwist the flywheel of repression that were to lead to mass deportations of Jews and outshine all previous eviction peoples of the Caucasus and Crimea. His death in 1953 is associated with many legends, gossip and is waiting for serious research, although the Crimean outline can be traced quite clearly. His successor, N.S. Khrushchev, despite the apparent simplicity, was extremely clever and good at intriguing. He was able to "dump" powerful Beria, and then the majority of the members of Stalin's politburo. Nowadays it gets too much for the Crimea, which was ceded to Ukraine with serious legal violations by the Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council dated 19 February 1952. Earlier it was discussed at the meeting of the Presidium of the CPSU Central Committee on January 25, 1954, presided over by G.M. Malenkov. So Khrushchev could not have taken this decision without Malenkov and Molotov. However, given his Ukrainian past and the proximity of the September Plenary Meeting, where he became the first secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, he could do some make concessions towards a strong lobby in the Ukrainian Central Committee.

For Khrushchev the Crimea was the last of his residence as the First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, where he was on holiday in 1964. On October 13, he was called by "hysterical" call of L.I. Brezhnev I to the Kremlin, where he was subjected to severe criticism for voluntarism and dismissed. After 27 years, history has repeated itself with the last president of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, who started a grand performance with the aim to retain power and defeat the democrats rushing to power under the banner of Yeltsin. While in Foros (Crimea), he was supposedly outside the Emergency Committee, awaiting the outcome of their performances, but indecision, lack of serious support of the Emergency Committee did not allow the people to preserve the Soviet Union, which soon ceased to exist.

Yelysin could correct historical injustice against the Crimea while signing the Belowezhskiy agreements, but he did not. He did not focus on the strategic development of the country or used the wrong means to solve the problem. As the result, by the time of his resignation, the country balanced on the brink of disintegration. Vigorous activity of the new President of Russia V.V. Putin gathered the country into the community, returned the respect in the world, and most importantly, the pride of the Russians for their own country. Annexation of the Crimea to Russia in 2014, without firing a shot, was a brilliant project of historical significance. Again, as it is constantly mentioned in history, the coalition of the countries rose against Russia, trying with the help of sanctions hoping to bring down the rating of the existing power. However, instead the rating of the Russian President Vladimir Putin soared to the unprecedented height and the movement "Our Crimea» united the Russians and became an integral part of the national idea. So Crimea once again played a historical role in the forming of our Russian spirit, respect for the history and Russian morality, according to which the countrymen in trouble always stay together!

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